

News Release

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Block Island NWR □ John H. Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove □ Ninigret NWR □ Sachuest Point NWR □ Truston Pond NWR



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2017

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Piping Plovers are back to Rhode Island

March 20, 2017 – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service needs your help this summer to protect threatened piping plovers, their nests and chicks on Rhode Island beaches. These rare migratory birds have returned to Rhode Island and will spend the next several weeks establishing territories and beginning to nest on the state's beaches.

The Service ropes off specific areas to protect the breeding birds from pedestrians, pets and vehicles, since disturbance can cause the birds to abandon the site or could result in eggs being unknowingly crushed. This year, the Service will expand the roped off area on the National Wildlife Refuge portion of Second Beach in Middletown down to the mean high water mark. The refuge portion of the beach will be closed to the public from April 1 to September 15, 2017.

The Service encourages visitors to follow these simple rules to assist in the management of the plovers in our state:

- Respect all areas fenced or posted for protection of wildlife.
- Do not approach or linger near piping plovers or their nests.
- Please leave pets at home. Plovers perceive dogs as predators.
- Don't leave or bury trash or food scraps on beaches. Garbage attracts predators which may prey upon piping plover eggs or chicks.
- Volunteer!

The piping plover is a small, stocky, sandy-colored bird resembling a sandpiper, and they have been protected under the federal Endangered Species Act since 1986. Since that time, piping plover numbers in the state have increased from 10 pairs to 98 pairs in 2016. Funding for the program comes from a cooperative agreement with the State of Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. Volunteers and Service staff monitor plover populations as well as educate the public. If you are interested in volunteering, please call Jennifer at 401-364-9124 ext. 4412.